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Nature's Manifestation

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Most of us live and work in towns and cities. Our most regular experience of nature comes from the urban parks and green spaces that we encounter as part of urban living. Contact with this nature through listening to birds chirping and seeing colourful flowering plants contributes to our quality of urban life. Parks and green spaces bring back nature to the urban setting and it is an essential element of liveable cities and towns. Good quality parks and green spaces are about creating a space that functions well, both present and in the future. It should also be attractive, providing an inspirational and special place for people. The following five projects explore and enrich nature in its own setting through diversity of flora and its fauna.

The first three projects by Lim Khim Joe, Tan Peng Koon and Lim Wei Ling manifest nature in an urban setting by creating lush vegetation spaces which are not only for public use but also to experience their fauna habitat. Lim Khim Joe designed a community garden in high-rise residential apartment by using green living concept where awareness on zero waste and the idea of community sharing were introduced. This project brings back nature to residents' front door and enhances their quality of life.

Similarly, both Tan Peng Koon and Lim Wei Ling also introduce lush green area in the middle of rapid urbanized cities for their river restoration projects. Both of these projects bring nature to city area to allow people to engage with the flora and share these spaces with its fauna. Interestingly, both projects' intention are not only to beautify the river but also to improve the water quality and its biodiversity. Such efforts would not only meet the needs of the present generations but also the future.

In other projects, Syamim Azhari and Koh Chee Ling explore the potential of existing nature (which is Gabai Waterfall in Selangor and Mangrove forest in Rembau) by bringing people closer to the natural environment through passive recreational activities. Both projects suggest forest health facilities where people are able to seek alternative healing in a forest-like setting for their psychological and physical fatigue. Both these natural environment settings attract not only nature lovers but also enhance its existing habitat biodiversity.

The landscape designers of these five projects interestingly portray and emphasize the importance of restoring and sustaining nature especially in rapidly urbanized cities. They believed that such natural spaces play a vital role in creating healthier and more sociable communities which may improve their quality of life. A strong focus and investment on nature play an even more important role for the sake of our future generations.

Jury Review

Green Living by Hasanuddin Lamit & Nik Malik Zainal Abidin

Adopting a "Green Living" concept in contrast to the more overwhelming and austere looking high-rise community neighbourhood is fitting. It is a very good and commendable attempt at community landscape which encourages social interaction as well as earning extra income for the community. The dynamics of how the landscape can function is most worthy especially with regard to the planting and harvesting periods. It can also function as a recreational area with a special purpose. Most of the interpretation of the concept seemed to make sense. The presentation of the work is very informative without having to go overboard with impressive and flamboyant graphics. Indeed, aesthetics in the conventional sense of the word is not a real concern of the designer, but the 'greenery' of the landscape itself is sufficient enough to be appreciated. The sustainability issue is without doubt manifested by the nature of the proposal and can be seen in its tangible and inherent attributes of the whole design idea.

Humanising Klang Riverscape by Hasanuddin Lamit & Nik Malik Zainal Abidin

Urban rivers have always been regarded as utilitarian components of urban landscape in the past but revered in the present as historically and culturally significant and aesthetically profound due to their natural inherent and obvious qualities. For the designer, to identify the site at the confluence of the two most historical rivers in Kuala Lumpur is to be lauded. "Humanizing the river" as a concept is appropriate since the rivers were documented as one of the beginnings of human settlement of Kuala Lumpur during its infancy. The rivers have in the past gone through several engineering and environmental interventions which have mitigated some problems but compounded others. The designer should not only address the engineering and environmental challenges of the area, but appreciate the perceived "Sense of Place" the site used to have or potentially could have. The rustic and naturalistic end-result after a two-phase proposed landscape development may not be in congruence of a city that wants to be modern and globally recognized. It is impractical also from the point of construction and maintenance: the sustainability aspect of the design can be doubtful. The selection of soft landscape materials is substantial and rationalized but difficult to ascertain its engineering and aesthetics significance. The technical solution in regard to controlling flood issues seems cumbersome, unwieldy and constructively impractical in the context of the current use and existing physical presence of many old and historical components along both banks of the rivers. The issue of carrying capacity of the site should have been well-addressed as it is pivotal to any design decisions that have to be made for the landscaping.

Restorative Forest by Hasanuddin Lamit & Nik Malik Zainal Abidin

A noble attempt to address the contention of public's desperate needs to rest, relax and undertake recreational activities with healing aspects to be incorporated into the design. However, the healing "properties" of a healing garden has not been ascertained and therefore restricts the avenue for exploration and interpretation in a much more profound manner. The designer should have begun by exploring the landscape with the "Five Senses" premise. The drawings lack the quality that should or could manifest the designer's creative ability and sensitivity. The "Sensory Neuron" as a concept is valid and acceptable but getting too engrossed with the biological details of nerves and cells work can be futile and unnecessary. A philosophical or abstract understanding and exploration would have made the design more evocative and profound. In the end, the design very much falls into the idea of conventionality with some traces or nuances of healing properties in some sections of the park that afford healing-based undertakings. Detail wise, the exploration still lacks the rigour and intensity usually found and needed in healing gardens such as texture and colours. The drawings do not display a concern for plant and hardscape materials either in terms of selection or design. It suggests more of space-making rather than place-making exercise. It is also worth exploring the "Prospect and Refuge" concept by Kaplan in the design as many who intend to use the spaces for self-healing purposes may not want to be seen or looked at as they may find the experience uncomfortable and intruding despite being in a public space. How the landscape and the healing-based as well as recreational activities can work hand-in-hand to achieve sustainability of use and quality of design is not apparent.

Green Filter by Hasanuddin Lamit & Nik Malik Zainal Abidin

The "Green Dragon" has a Chinese cultural connotation and whether it is appropriate for the area is doubtful. However, its design study or synthesis of water treatment plan, hydrology plan and circulation plan are excellent. The linearity of the water body predisposed itself to many opportunities for interaction by residents or users along its route. The "Oasis" has long been a proverbial and recurring concept by landscape architects and architects alike. The designer has adopted this concept for its detailed plan and since oasis has a tranquil and refreshing connotation, the design of this particular area is not without similar qualities. The tactile quality of the plants surrounding the water body is appealing. The design of the viewing tower is a bit over the top when a much simple one is more appropriate by a better concentration on the softer aspects of the landscape. A statement about the use of hardscape materials and construction would not go amiss. Similarly, a planting concept or statement that addresses the issues of the site is also recommended.

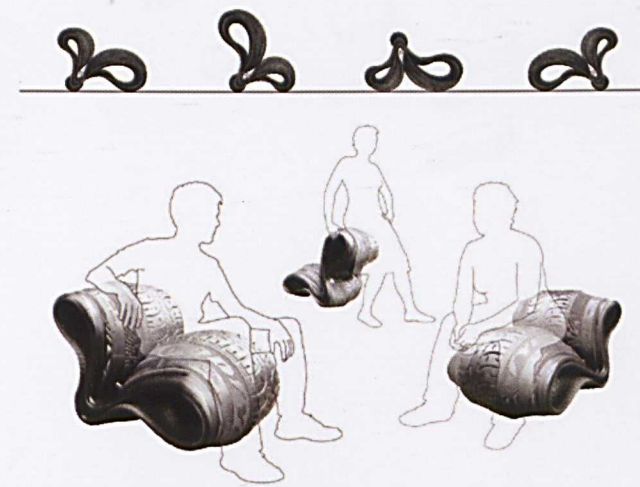
Green Sphere by Lee Wern Ching & Mohd Ramzi Mohd Hussain

The project is about redesigning Pengkalan Nelayan, Kampung Sungai Timun, Rembau as one of the tourist attractions in Negeri Sembilan. Based on site inventory and analysis, it shows strong understanding of the site and this synthesis is crucial to produce good and high quality of landscape resource planning. The process of dividing the analysis into four main aspects - green network, blue network, spatial and circulation, and attractions-become very strong principles in the overall planning and ideas development. Furthermore, at the conceptual plan stage, there were eight aspects to be considered with each of them providing clear understanding of the overall design ideas. It was followed by the design strategy, activity programmes and landscape distribution aspects before finalizing at the master plan stage. It has a very good and very organized presentation with the use of layering techniques as a tool to support the idea. Moreover, the flow is very well-defined and well-presented.

Green Living

Mohd Johari Mohd Yusof & Nordin Abdul Rahman

The housing project portrays the concept of Green Living through the integration of composting, rainwater harvesting and community garden project. His design solutions create awareness on zero waste attitudes among the residents. The natural rainwater is harvested and reused to water the plants and fit for non-portable purposes. The idea of community-sharing through a community garden is emphasized in this green housing project. The environmentally responsive and healthy living environment introduced in this design scheme meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future generations.



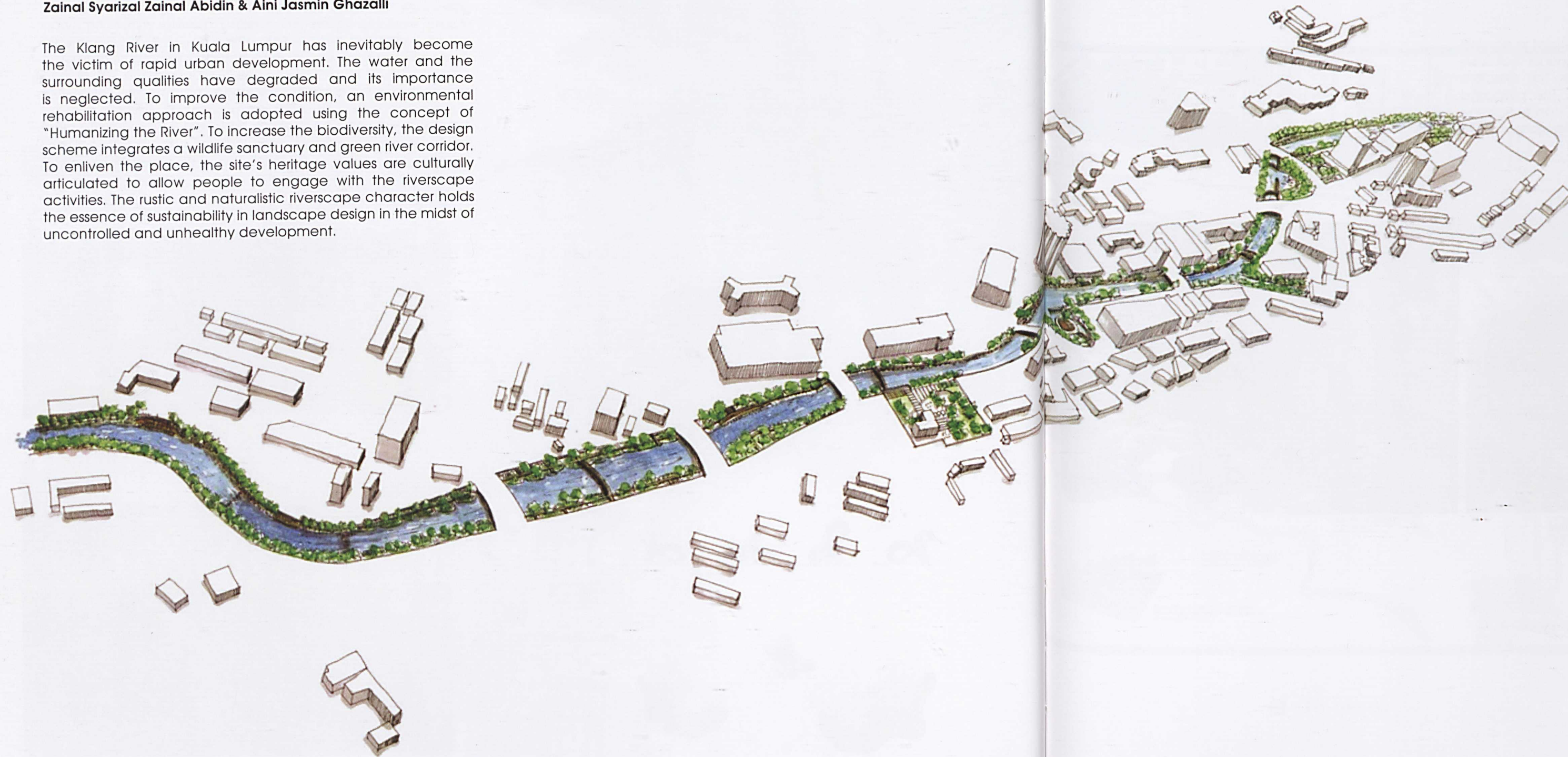
Lim Khim Joe



Humanizing Klang Riverscape

Zainal Syarizal Zainal Abidin & Aini Jasmin Ghazalli

The Klang River in Kuala Lumpur has inevitably become the victim of rapid urban development. The water and the surrounding qualities have degraded and its importance is neglected. To improve the condition, an environmental rehabilitation approach is adopted using the concept of "Humanizing the River". To increase the biodiversity, the design scheme integrates a wildlife sanctuary and green river corridor. To enliven the place, the site's heritage values are culturally articulated to allow people to engage with the riverscape activities. The rustic and naturalistic riverscape character holds the essence of sustainability in landscape design in the midst of uncontrolled and unhealthy development.



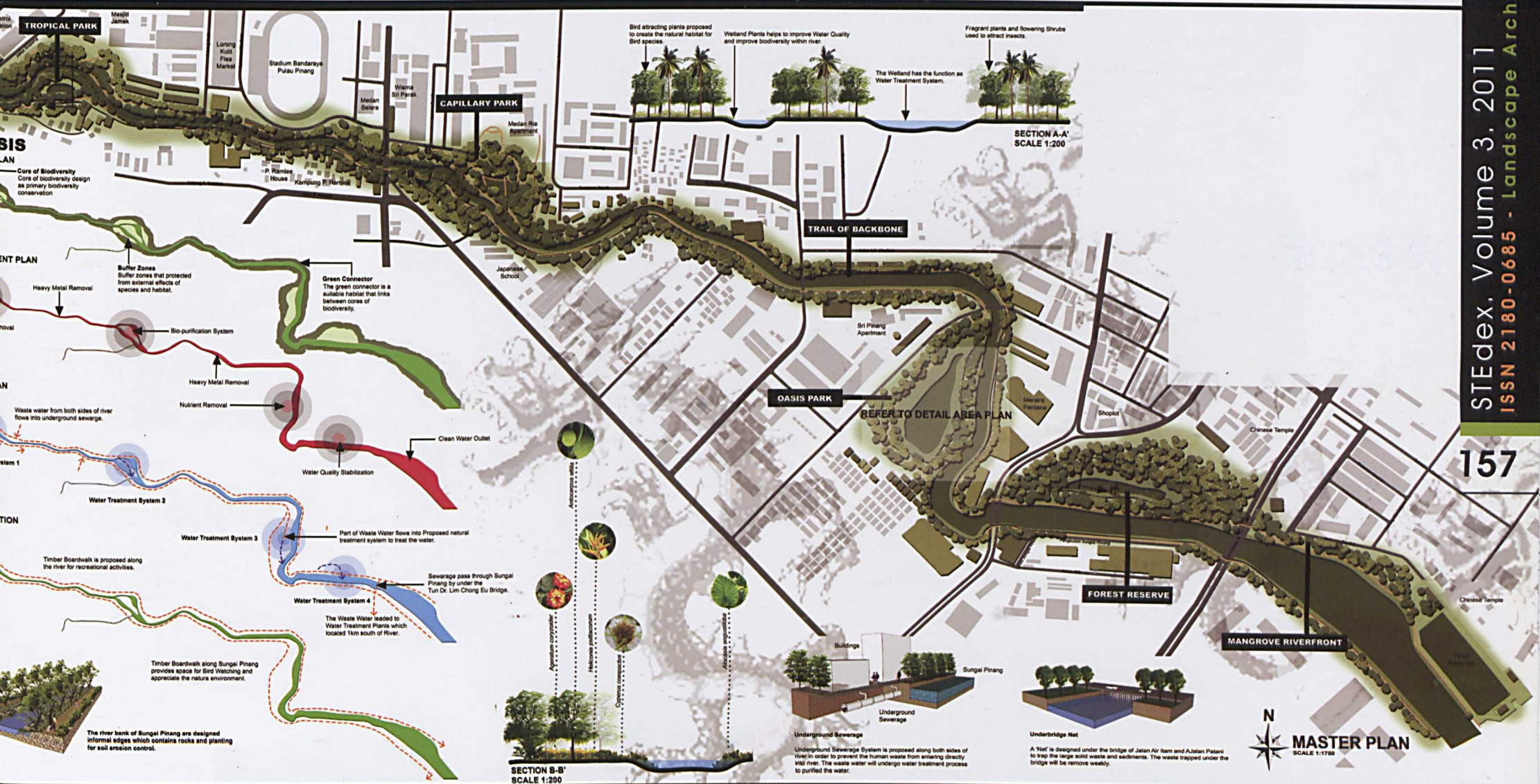
■ Tan Peng Koon

Green Filter

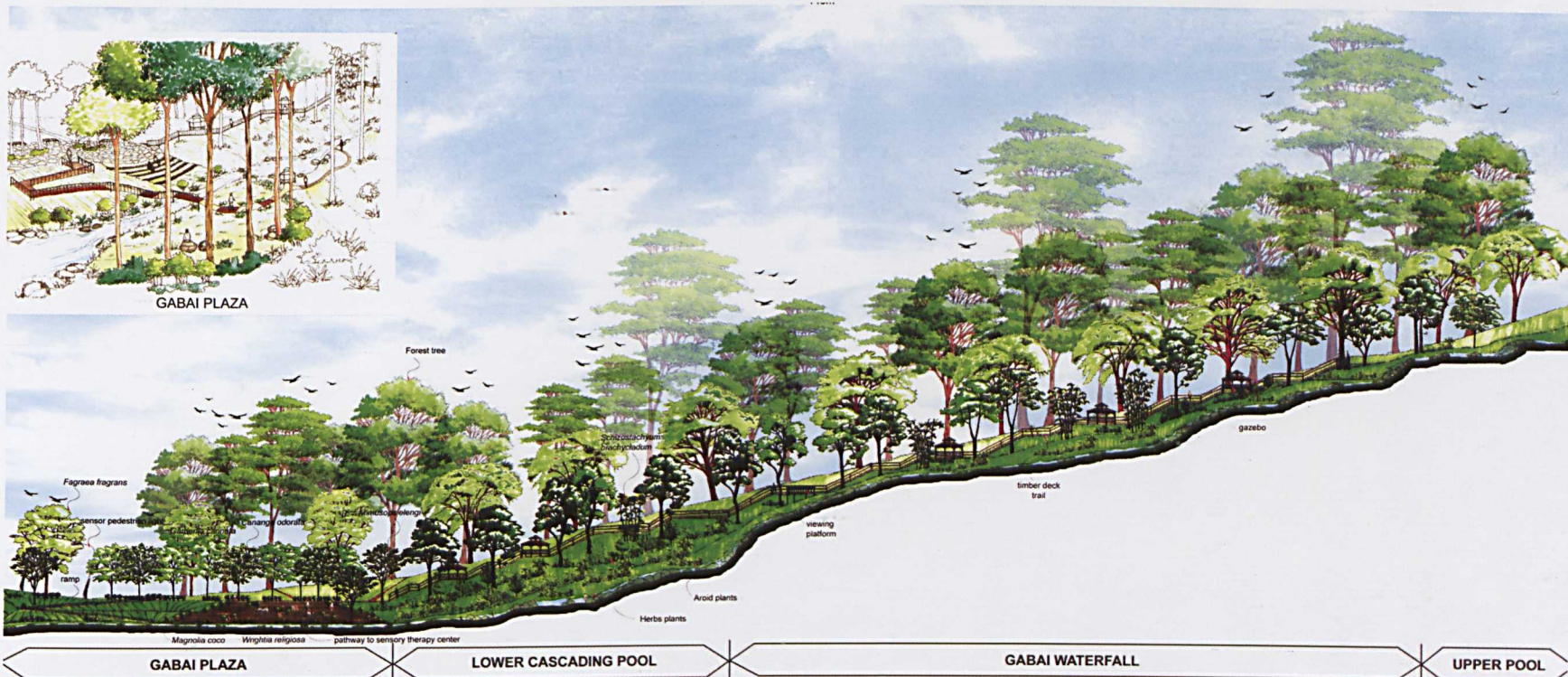
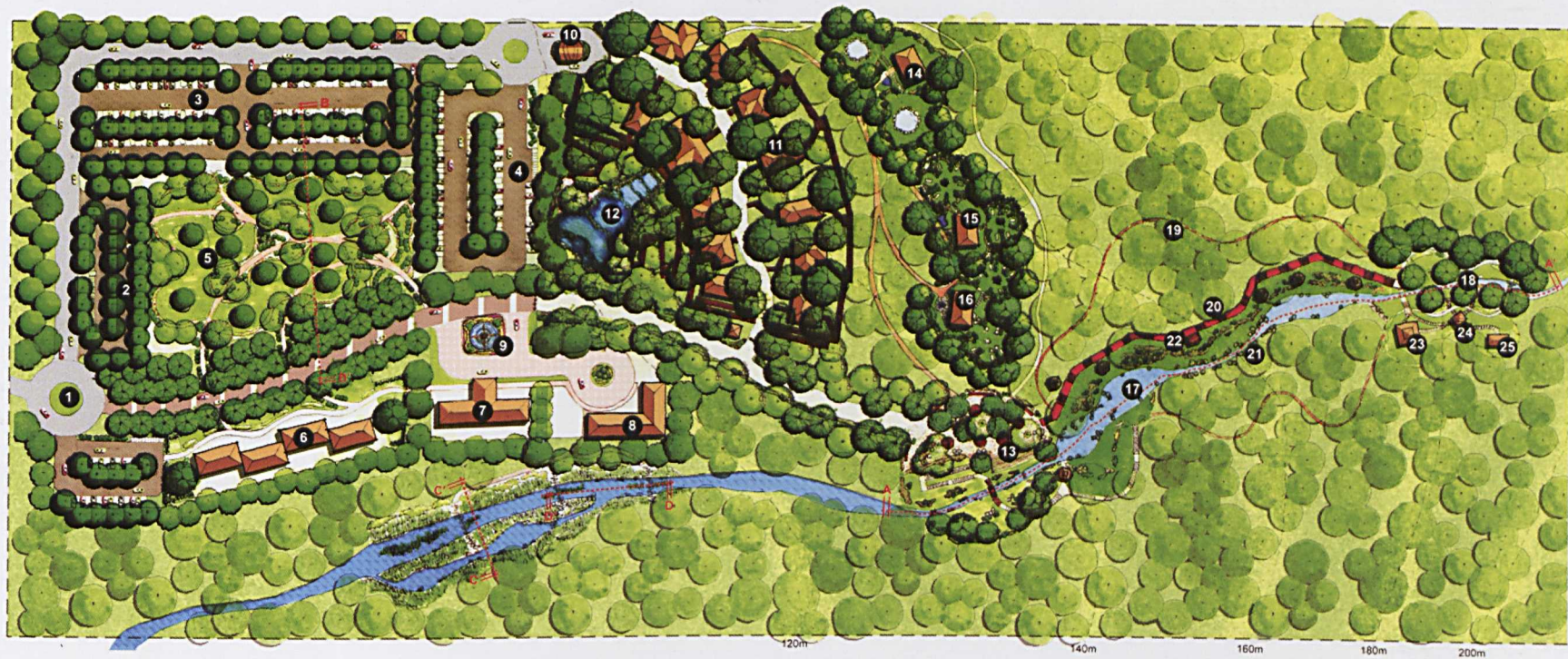
Mohd Nazri Saidon, Abd Aziz Othman, Ina Krisantia & Murad Abd Ghani

This project explores the environmental aspects of *Sungai Pinang*. Aiming at improving the water quality and biodiversity, the design integrates waste water channel that flows into the underground sewerage system for water treatment strategies. The selective plant species function as litter filter and sediment control methods. The proposed natural environmental setting attracts the natural wildlife habitat that can enrich the surrounding environment. Multipurpose human facilities and activities are incorporated to ensure dynamic recreational uses.





■ Lim Wei Ling

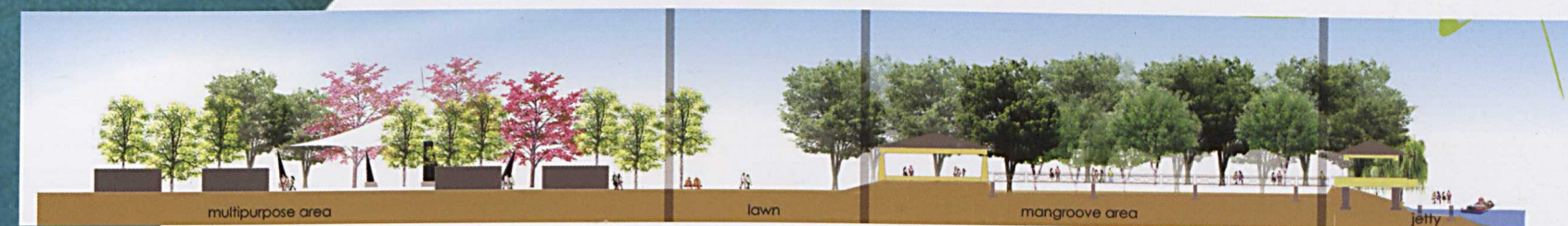




Green Sphere

Abd Aziz Othman & Mohd Nazri Saidon

The potential of existing mangrove forest and cultural landscape in Pengkalan Nelayan, Rembau, Negeri Sembilan is utilized for passive recreation and natural environmental attractions. A sensitive design approach using an overlay analysis is adopted as a solution to protect the delicate natural ecological systems. The design introduces an Olmsted-like counterpart between the wilderness and formality. This project suggests that rural cultural landscape is environmentally appropriate and aesthetically pleasing to enhance human experience.



■ Syamim Azhari